

Exploring The Impact Of Off Campus Program In Teacher Education

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Abstract: *Along with rapid changes in education patterns and processes there is a massive shift in teacher education as well. The process need to be analyzed and given implications to strengthen the teachers of the nation. It is found that in majority of universities the 'off campus program' is not included in the syllabus of the teacher education. However, the value of the program cannot be neglected while contemplating over the quality education and quality teacher education. The purpose of the study is to discover the impact of this program on the student trainees and to give some implications to the policy framers. The present study was undertaken in Saurashtra University (India), which offers this program. The randomly selected focused group was interviewed and the field notes submitted by them were analyzed in a qualitative tradition of analysis. The major finding was the positive attitude and multiple skill development of the student trainees. They were of the opinion that the 'off campus program' was quite beneficial in developing various qualities of an ideal teacher in them. The study also recommends the 'off campus program' to be continued in teacher education program and it should implemented where ever it's not.*

Keywords: Teacher Education, off campus program, Implications, quality education, quality teachers training.

1. Introduction

The society is a product of implicit and explicit consequences of human beings, wherein juxtaposition of tangible and intangible components catalyze an eternal process of change through interactions between various components. As education plays an indispensable role in the formation, development, and modifications of social norms, there will be no exaggeration in considering education as one of the prime factors and a driving force that directs and leads to such social changes, though various other reasons also may be traced for the same.

Since people building is one of the major objectives of education, it contains in itself a process of treating the living conscience and molding it i.e. giving and regulating shape as per the requirement of the society. A living being, having a quite complex existence, keep on changing time to time for it is a product of emotions and expressions, gathering and generating knowledge through the emotional expressions and ultimately creating a value based knowledge system. Role of education is to provide such values with strength and shield them in the society, which makes it a core component of the society with a quite unique and significant role to play.

The teacher, being at the centre of the education system, has an extremely significant role to play in educational process. To acquire quality and to impart quality changes cannot be neglected while justifying the role of a teacher, which naturally proves the importance of teacher education institutions.

In this connection NCTE's statement will be worthy to be stated here,

"As the integral component of educational system, teacher education has to address itself to the challenges of the society and participate actively in their solution. A teacher

education which is not sensitive to the problems of Indian society is a burden on the national exchequer which meets its cost. It is, therefore necessary for it to enlarge its goal and scope." (NCTE, 2004)

Thus, it becomes must for teacher education to develop such skills and values among their teacher. Any field, that wants to match its performance to the needs, has to make extensive research in that area. Quality researches and its outcomes have always been adding value to the field. Pitrola, stating the importance of Qualitative research goes to the extent of saying the following,

"Quality research in India is fundamental for generating intellectual capital necessary to survive and sustain economic growth and prosperity in competitive global markets." (Pitrola, 2008)

To enhance the quality of teacher education, vigorous qualitative and quantitative researches are required to be undertaken. It is thus necessary to harness talent and expertise to develop capacity within the teacher education also. Research is an intellectual activity. However, as stated previously, human being is a set of implicit and explicit qualities; it is the must to be measured by both. Education is a process of value addition, may be in society or in individual. To investigate such areas, there is a separate research tradition. Qualitative research helps to find such internal aspects of the behavior in terms of individual or social.

Wikipedia states the aim of qualitative research in following words,

"Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. The qualitative method investigates the *why* and *how* of decision making, not just *what*, *where*, *when*." (Wikipedia)

The present research work is a research under qualitative research tradition aiming at finding out the social values developed among student trainees through the teacher education program. The investigator has tried to unfold the expression of the trainees about the off „campus program“. In addition to the above it aims at providing a list of various activities and value outcomes of it in reference to the sustainable society. The investigator also wants to give implications of these research findings to the teacher education program.

2. Problem Statement

This study has two fuses; one is a qualitative research of a sampled program in teacher education and second is the implications of the findings of this research work. The present inquiry deals with the interpretive research method to find out the beliefs of the student trainees about off campus program in teacher education. As, having controversies for this program, the researcher felt a need to explore the area. The findings of this qualitative research will provide implications to the policy makers too.

In the matter of policy making and implementing processes Bowe, Ball with Gold opines, “Qualitative and interpretive research can extend the comprehension of the vastness and complexity of such policy processes and may facilitate a deeper, sophisticated and more complex understanding, enabling and supporting the policy implementation process. In other words, people, processes, practices, and policies evoke interwoven and complex dynamics in the field of education. Such processes cannot be viewed in a linear approach; as if once policy has been initiated it is implemented as intended. On the contrary, as stated in the previous section, all too often teachers remain in the background, while policy makers at provincial and national level produce policy. Although teacher unions may represent them at policy level, teachers' voices are seldom heard. That said, little research is conducted that relates to the silent voices of the teachers, who are either overwhelmed "beyond their control" or "autonomous resisters or subverters of the status quo" (Bowe, Ball with Gold, 1992)

3. Aim of the Study

The present research work aims at exploring the impact of off campus program in teacher education, along with giving a sample of qualitative research findings which helps to have further implications too of the same area. The silent voice of the trainees is to be interpreted and to show it to the policy process debates is the intention of the study. This inquiry seeks to explore and explain how a group of trainees engage in programs and help policy implementation and aims to capture the dynamics of policy implementation from a qualitative and interpretive perspective. This descriptive exploration brings to light how qualitative research can inform policy implementation at a micro-level.

Research Questions

1. What are the beliefs of student trainees about „off campus program“?

2. Which social values are generated through „off campus program“?
3. What individual values are developed through „off campus program“?
4. What are the educational implications of the „off campus program“?

4. Research Design

The present study deals with the qualitative research findings of the „off campus program“ by the student trainees of Saurashtra University (India). To explore the value of the program, out of nine granted colleges, trainees of three colleges were selected as the sample of the study through a random stratified method. From these three colleges, 25 trainees were asked to write their reports, 25 students were asked to write their reflective field notes, and 10 students were interviewed. A semi structured interview was framed and used. Their field notes (Reports) were also collected which were in descriptive form. The sampled trainees were asked to give their reflective field notes also. The data was collected electronically and in person. The audio recording of the interview was done to have more clarity. The data was analyzed in a qualitative tradition. Descriptive field notes were analyzed in Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K.(2003)-tradition .1. Portrait of the subject 2. Reconstruction of dialogue 3. Description of the physical settings 4. Accounts of particular events 5. Depiction of activities 6. The observers" behavior. The reflective field notes were analyzed in the same tradition i.e. Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (2003), 1. Reflections on analysis 2. Reflections on method 3. Reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts 4. Reflections on observers frame of mind 5. Points of clarifications. The interviews were also analyzed in terms of frequency data and non- frequency data analysis method. The information was interpreted to get findings.

5. Research Findings

In education qualitative research has a very vital role to play. It gives a very clear, sound and deep picture of the process. Participatory researches are often found more reliable than any other forms of research. Bhogayta (2004) says, “The teacher education is to provide planned experiences to develop a teacher.” Teacher education gives many such experiences. Off campus program is one of these kinds of programs. The participative and reflective expressions were interpreted and the following findings emerged.

1. The program gives a compound school experience.
2. The program develops a sense of responsibility.
3. The participation in this program leads to a leadership quality in the trainees.
4. The ethical values are enhanced.
5. A stronger bondage is developed among students and teachers.
6. The values of a teacher educator are also imitated.
7. Communication skill is being improved.
8. Various social classes and discriminations are identified.
9. Recognition of local social problems.
10. Fraternity development at its paramount.
11. Community and its impacts on education are analyzed by the trainees.
12. Personal weaknesses are identified.

13. Reflective thinking develops.
14. Spontaneity develops.
15. Decision making training is sought.
16. Emotional attachment with school children is experienced.
17. Self esteem is developed.
18. School administration skills also develop.
19. Students and their behavioral problems are identified and solving potential also is increased.
20. Psychological problems are identified and solutions for the same are given by guidance and counseling.
21. Academic manners are developed.
22. Team spirit is also increased.
23. Human values are inculcated.
24. Introduction to the students" likes and dislikes.
25. Individual values like commitment, honesty, love, tolerance, and sportsman spirit are developed.

6. Implications of Findings of the Research for the Teacher Education

Education policies are changing as per need. It also gets changed because of the global perspective change. The global scenario is a very strong factor affecting the education policies. The role of education is very important in any society at any time. The departments such as the education council and education ministry take immense care in framing the syllabus for the program. The university also has a very important role in this direction.

It is therefore, very essential to have a deep look into the stake holders" perception and the need of the society at large. The objective of teacher education is to benefit and uplift the society. To develop teachers of high quality, we need to have such multidimensional programs in the syllabus. The findings of this study will give a clear in-depth understanding of teacher behavior and its analysis. The findings will also direct the policy framers to implement the programs such as the one that has been researched in the study. To enhance the teacher quality, the programs like off campus should be strongly recommended which develops individual as well as social skills among the trainees.

7. Conclusion

Teacher education is a professional program which should contain variety of such programs in the syllabus through which the professional skills can be developed. Participative and qualitative research would give a pure quality picture of the same. Education is a human participatory process. Qualitative research outcomes may help to modify the program and to envision its objectives. The study is a sample for the same kind of research. To look into the human behavior and to meet its need to shape it produce a highly skilled teachers is the aim of any teacher education program. Qualitative research helps to reflect on the process and the vision behind it.

To sum up, Crossley and Vulliamy"s statement will be worthwhile in this context, who contend,

"Qualitative research in education has a special potential in developing countries; for various historical and cultural reasons, education research in such countries has been dominated by positivist strategies. Many educational research questions in developing countries to which a quantitative research strategy has been applied when either a qualitative one or a combination of the two would have been more appropriate. ... [Importantly,] the narrative style of qualitative research reports can also be more accessible to a wider range of potential readers; and in predominantly oral cultures the advantages of personal fieldwork, in-depth interviews and observation are most significant. ... [However,] there remains a tendency in many developing countries for research and policy planning to be based on a system perspective that still neglects the realities of schooling in an everyday context." (Crossley and Vulliamy 1995, p.2)

Education is a process of people building. Human being is a complex creation. It has some hidden reasons of their behavior. To have clear understanding of this implicit behavior, qualitative research helps a lot. It is very much advisable to do more qualitative researches to widen the teacher education perspective and to implement quality programs to develop good teachers who ultimately benefits society.

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Author Profile



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